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MacArthur Lock closes Dec. 15 for winter inspection and maintenance

DETROIT – One of the two operational locks at the world famous Soo Locks in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. will be shutting down for the winter season the morning of Dec. 15.

The closing of the MacArthur Lock—one of the Soo's operational locks—comes as it will undergo a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-mandated regular inspection, which is held every five years. The MacArthur Lock will close at 7 a.m. Monday, and will reopen in early April.

During the shutdown, the lock will be drained and undergo a thorough inspection of all components as part of a 5-year periodic inspection.

After this year's inspection, any needed repairs will be made along with repainting of the lock's furthest downstream gate.

"The 5-year inspection of the MacArthur Lock helps to ensure that the St. Marys Falls Canal is able to maintain its high level of availability to the shipping industry avoiding unscheduled closures during the navigation season," said Michael Panik, a civil engineer with the Soo Area Office of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Operation and maintenance of the Soo Locks falls under the jurisdiction of the Corps' Detroit District. Located on St. Marys Falls Canal, the locks have been a part of the Corps' navigation mission since 1881.

The other operational lock, the Poe Lock, will remain operational on a 24-hour basis through its normal closing date, Jan. 15, 2009.

During the 2007 calendar year, 4,309 vessels passed through the MacArthur Lock while a total of 8,461 vessels passed through both locks, carrying 81 million tons of cargo.

The Poe Lock is expected to reopen March 25, its normal reopening date, while the MacArthur Lock is expected to open about two weeks later, Panik said.

For additional information or questions on the Soo Locks, please call the Soo Area Office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at (906) 632-3311, or call the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Detroit District Public Affairs Officer, Lynn Duerod, at (313) 226-4680.